

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA
PHILADELPHIA DIVISION

Sherice Sargent, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

Case No. 2:22-cv-01509-CFK

The School District of Philadelphia, et al.,

Defendants.

DECLARATION OF SHERICE SARGENT

1. My name is Sherice Sargent. I am over 21 years old and fully competent to make this declaration. I submit this declaration in support of the plaintiffs' motion for class certification.
2. I am a plaintiff in this litigation.
3. I am a resident of the city of Philadelphia and the mother of two children who attend school in the School District of Philadelphia. My son is in twelfth grade and my daughter is in eighth grade.
4. My daughter is currently enrolled at George Washington Carver High School of Engineering and Science, a science, engineering, and technical school for grades 7 through 12.
5. My daughter wants to continue her studies at Carver, which is a criteria-based high school specializing in science and technology.
6. When my daughter was first admitted to Carver, a school-district official stated that if she maintained the admissions criteria she would be able to continue her education at Carver when she entered ninth grade.

7. This was the practice of the middle school at Carver since its opening eight years ago. The middle school was created for the purpose of preparing its students for the academic rigors of high school.

8. My daughter has maintained an A/B average and meets all of the criteria for admission into Carver for the ninth grade.

9. But contrary to the school-district official's previous representations, my daughter is no longer able to continue at Carver on account of the school district's decision to replace the school's merit-based admissions program with a lottery system, with preferences given to students residing certain so-called "underrepresented zip codes."

10. My family does not reside in any of the "underrepresented zip codes" that receive admissions preferences.

11. My daughter was waitlisted at Carver (originally receiving waitlist number 187) and was placed in Walter B. Saul High School, an agricultural school that specializes in teaching students how to become farmers.

12. The district eventually cancelled the waitlist for Carver so my daughter never gained admission or placement. Even though the school district added 100 additional students to Carver, 24 current students at Carver were denied admission and are unable to continue their studies there. Of those 24 soon-to-be-former Carver students, 17 are black, four are Asian, two are white and one is Hispanic.

13. My daughter has always been a highly academically motivated student.

14. My daughter is immersed in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and she chose Carver because of the computer-science track that they start in middle school. Her brother is a current twelfth grader at Carver. She started volunteering at the school four years ago because her brother's enrollment and became interested in computer science and robotics. My daughter eventually left her K-8 school and enrolled at Carver because wants to follow in her brother's footsteps.

Her brother recently completed the technology track at Carver and has matriculated into a tech program at an out-of-state university where he was offered a scholarship.

15. My daughter intends to enroll in a technology-focused college. Her goal is to gain acceptance to Drexel University's computer-science program. Drexel has a partnership with Carver.

16. Saul does not have any computer science or robotics classes or programs.

17. Saul has a lower graduation and college admissions rate than Carver.

18. Our catchment school was closed five years ago due to poor performance, so we have no choice but to attend schools outside our neighborhood.

19. My daughter is being grievously harmed by the school district's change in admissions standards, which was designed to achieve racial balancing at the city's criteria-based high schools. My daughter is black and the school district is intentionally trying to reduce black enrollment at Carver, along with Palumbo and Parkway Center City, in an effort to achieve racial balancing.

20. The school district's new admissions policies have caused a significant decline in the number of black students enrolled at Carver.

21. I have been active in opposing the school district's change in admissions policies to its criteria-based schools, and I have taken a leadership role among parents who opposed these changes.

22. I have organized over 100 parents and held city-wide town halls in partnership with Temple University, the YMCA, and local churches. I also organized a parent march involving over 300 residents, including students, parents, and education-advocacy organizations representing members of all races—Hispanic, Asian, white and black. I also served as a media spokesperson and point of contact for a parent organization. And I have partnered with over ten organizations to educate the parents in the school district on their rights.

23. I have met with school-board members and state and city politicians to discuss the effects to the school district's new admissions policies on their constituents.

24. Since entering the School District of Philadelphia in 2017, I have been an active parent volunteer. I devoted over five hours per week to Carver as a Home & School Association volunteer. I was elected to represent the Carver parent body as the President. I successfully partnered with the school by bringing financial resources and programs to benefit all students, staff, and parents of Carver over the last four years.

This concludes my sworn statement. I declare under penalty of perjury that the facts stated in this declaration are true and correct.

Dated: 5/10/2022

DocuSigned by:

Sherice Sargent
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SHERICE SARGENT